

Application No.: 09/316,430
Amendment dated: August 23, 2004
Reply to Office Action of: February 23, 2004

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as indicated. A complete set of the claims is included below, reflecting added subject matter (*underlining*) and deleted subject matter (*strikethrough*), as well as the current status of each claim. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1 - 16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) A computerized system for forming a computer based communications network of network members inclusive of network buyers and or network vendors for processing requests for proposal for goods and services through at least one central processing unit including:

operating system software for controlling the central processing unit, said network members being remotely located from said central processing unit and connected thereto via a communications channel, the central processing unit being coupled to a storage means containing identification of the network members,

means for network buyers to generate request for proposal for goods and/or services,

means for transmitting said request for proposal to said central processing unit,

filter means structure for filtering or selecting the network members in said storage means to determine which network members are to receive said request for proposal based upon filter conditions set up by the network buyer in said request for proposal or by the central processing unit in accordance with preestablished conditions,

means for broadcasting said request for proposal to the network members selected by said filter means, and

means for responding to the generator of said request with either a response from the selected network members or with a list of said selected

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network members for said generator of said request to establish independent communication.

18. (Previously Presented) A computerized system as defined in claim 17 wherein said network members communicate via an on-line computer service through said central processing system.

19. (Currently Amended) A method for processing requests for proposal for goods and/or services from a party representing a buyer or supplier of goods and/or services through a computerized system forming a computer based communications network of network members for linking buyers to suppliers with the computerized system having at least one central processing unit including operating system software for containing the identification of the network members, wherein the method comprises the steps of:

receiving a buyer's request for proposal over a communication network;

selecting one or more appropriate vendors to be sent the buyer's request for proposal based upon filter or selection conditions, set by the buyer, vendor and the network software;

transmitting the buyer's request for proposal separately to said selected vendors over said communications network; and with said selected vendors over said communications network; and

with said selected vendors communicating their proposals either directly to the buyer or to the computerized system which in turn transmits said received proposals to the requesting buyer.

20. (Currently Presented) A computerized system for engaging in transactions over a data network, said computerized system comprising:

a plurality of terminals, at least one of which being designated a requestor and others of which are designed vendor terminals;

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filter and broadcast ~~means~~ structure for receiving, over said data network, requests from said requestor to engage in transactions with unspecified vendor terminals, and for filtering said request to determine with which vendor terminals said requests should be matched; and

means for matching said requests with vendor terminals which meet predetermined filter conditions for generating quotes from information contained in a database associated with said vendor terminals, and for accepting said quotes from said vendor terminals, wherein the central database contains information that is insufficient to consummate the transaction.

21. (Currently Amended) The computerized system of claim 20 further comprising means for communicating responses from said vendor terminals to said filter and broadcast means; and

means at said filter and broadcast structure ~~means~~ for communicating a selected set of said responses to said requestor.

22. (Previously Presented) The computerized system of claim 21 wherein said transaction is a purchase, and wherein the purchase may comprise a plurality of items.

23. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 22 further comprising: means for establishing communications between said filter and broadcast ~~means~~ structure and said vendor terminals which meet said filter conditions; and means for determining whether a quote for said transaction from a particular vendor terminal meeting said filter conditions should be sent to said requestor.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 wherein said communications is continuous.

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25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 wherein said communications are periodic.

26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 25 wherein said communications is are initiated by said vendor terminal.

27. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein further comprising means for automatically notifying a buyer when particular items meeting specified conditions become available from a seller.

28. (Currently Amended) A method of purchasing goods or services over a data network comprising the steps of:

communicating, over said data network, to a filter ~~means~~ or selection structure, at least one request for a proposal from a potential buyer of said goods or services;

filtering, at said filter ~~means~~ or selection structure, the at least one request in order to ascertain a set of sellers potentially capable of supplying said goods or services; and

obtaining, from at least one of said potential sellers, over a data network, quotes to supply said goods or services, and forwarding said quotes to said potential buyer, wherein at least part of the quote information is stored at a location remote from said filter ~~means~~ or selection structure.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 28 further comprising the step of accepting filtering conditions from said potential buyer, and utilizing said filtering conditions in said step of filtering to determine a subset of potentially capable sellers.

30. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 28 wherein said step of obtaining comprises the step of each seller contacting said filter or selection structure

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~~means~~ at predetermined intervals and supplying bids in response to any requests for proposal that have arrived at said filter or selection structure ~~filtering means~~ and that were determined, by the filter means, to be a request for proposal for goods or services which said each seller is potentially capable of supplying.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 28 wherein said step of obtaining comprises the step of automatically and periodically supplying the filter or selection structure ~~means~~ with information sufficient to assemble a bid, and sending the bid to said potential buyer via e-mail.

32. (Currently Amended) A method of matching buyers of goods and services with sellers of goods and services over a data network comprising the steps of:

communicating, from buyers to a filter structure ~~means~~, requests for proposals (RFPs);

filtering said RFPs so that only sellers meeting a first set of filter conditions receive said RFPs;

transmitting, to remotely located seller databases, the filter RFPs;

accepting quotes from sellers meeting said first set of filter conditions, and filtering said quotes so that only quotes meeting additional filter conditions are sent to a buyer requesting said quotes.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said additional filter conditions are determined by said vendor.

34. (Currently Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said additional filter conditions are determined by said filter structure ~~means~~.

35 - 52 (Canceled)